

I wish I was a queen fish
swimmin' in the deep blue sea,

And the backup singers chanted:

Sea sea sea, sea sea sea.

And Evelyn continued:

I wish I was a queen fish,
swimmin' in the deep blue sea,

Sea sea sea, sea sea sea.

Evelyn eschewed the microphone. Her voice had enough power without artificial amplification. The windows in the book store shimmered. The girls behind the counter in the Taco Bell grimaced and covered their ears. And the crowd of shoppers flowed wide, giving Evelyn and the band plenty of room to perform. The backup singers clapped and swayed, swung their big butts back and forth, and the horn players blew until their veins popped out, and Evelyn threw the microphone into the fountain and bellowed:

'Cause if I was a queen fish
swimmin' in that deep blue sea

(Sea sea sea, sea sea sea)

Then all those pretty king fish
would come and take a bite of me.

(me me me, me me me)

And four-year-old Roy Leahy, son of back-up singer Ruth and tuba player Ellis, took advantage of his parents' intense concentration to their task by escaping, joining the flowing crowd and being carried away by it, like a rolling pebble in an inexorable current.

VARIATION ON A BLUES THEME, Part 2

The management at the mall wanted to appeal to all ages with their choice of entertainment for the Labor Day Sale, so in addition to the lady vocalist and brass band that was playing corny old Gershwin tunes and some revamped blues outside The May Company, they also hired a young techno-punk group to play at the opposite end of the enclosure, in front of the J.C. Penny store....

Nichole flicked her cigarette butt into the planter box, zipped her black leather jacket down to her navel and mum-

bled into the microphone, "This is a song my boy-friend Brett just wrote." Brett pushed an ink-black forelock out of his eyes and punched a button on a massive boom box, and the air began to throb as the speakers womped out a metronomic, seismic-powered beat, and Nichole's voice, tinny and shrill on the sound system, screeched out:

I wish I was a big ol'
Turquoise two-door Mercedes,

And the speakers boomed out:

WOMP WOMP WOMP, WOMP WOMP WOMP.

I wish I was a big ol'
Turquoise two-door Mercedes,

WOMP WOMP WOMP, WOMP WOMP WOMP

Nichole stood statue-still as she sang, but her dancers — Trina and Troy and Brett — lurched behind her, robotic and machine-like, writhing to the electronic rhythm.

'Cause then those pretty rich boys
would dip their dipsticks down in me

WOMP WOMP WOMP, WOMP WOMP WOMP.

Also dancing to the music was Nichole's eighteen-month-old daughter Babette, spinning, hopping, shivering with the vibrations, and giggling (though this couldn't be heard over the noise) with glee. Experiencing, almost, the rapture.

And from out of the crowd of scowling, derisive, fingers-in-the-ears shoppers came four-year-old Roy Leahy, separated from his parents and not the least bit concerned. He was watching the little girl dance. He didn't have the words to express it, but his soul told him that this was a beautiful creature, a child with a face the color of a chocolate Easter bunny, pure joy in a fuzzy pink sleeper. Roy walked out and took her hand and joined her in her dance, and Nichole, slumping behind her microphone, smiled in spite of herself.

— Dan Lenihan

Oceanside CA